

out thinking, let's see? where was I
going? oh yes, the post office.
I needed stamps.

I hit the classical music button
on the car radio.

GUEST

we got drunk
and then he started,
he said, "listen, I know that
people claim you're uneducated
and unread
but here we've been talking about
The Red and the Black,
you know that Lorca was gunned down
in a Spanish road.
you've mentioned the painters
and I know that you know of
the great musicians.
you know who wrote The Cherry
Orchard,
you know that Ambrose Bierce was
killed by Mexican bandits.
and you know who wrote The Devil's
Dictionary,
you know who whipped Hemingway's
ass and that Gertrude Stein had a
wooden leg.
you know of the one who went mad
in a rowboat.
you know those who died of syphilis.
and you know that Anton Chekov
shot his dog ... pardon me"

he got up, went into the bathroom.
I could hear him puking.

then he walked out, sat on the couch,
lit his pipe, took a hit at his beer
can, put it down and passed out,
sitting there, his head dropping
just a bit.

she came down the stairway.
"is he all right?"

"he's all right, he's staying
tonight, I think."

"I'm sorry I left but I couldn't
listen anymore, he just kept
talking."

"it's all right," I said.

I turned off the lights and went up the stairway with her.

"it's pitiful," she said, "he adores you."

"he thinks I'm a genius," I said.

"are you?" she asked as we got to the bedroom.

"I will be if I can get rid of him."

we stood there getting undressed.

"have you brushed your teeth?" she asked.

"many times," I answered.

then I got into bed, fast.
I was better at getting into bed than anybody that I knew.

then she climbed in:

"is your friend downstairs going to be all right?"

"he'll make the night and he'll return," I told her.

some things you just sleep away
and I decided to do that
as we faced away
I slipped my feet to the backs
of her calves
while half a block down
the dogs of night
barked about nothing.

THE WAVERING LINE

I don't know where they come from ...
the vet's ward, probably ...
they're old, balding, macho but
sexless ...
the sex drive is no longer important,
they are at the track everyday
arguing over their choices,
laughing ...
sometimes in between races they'll
talk about sports: which is best,
the best baseball team, the best